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On Ascites

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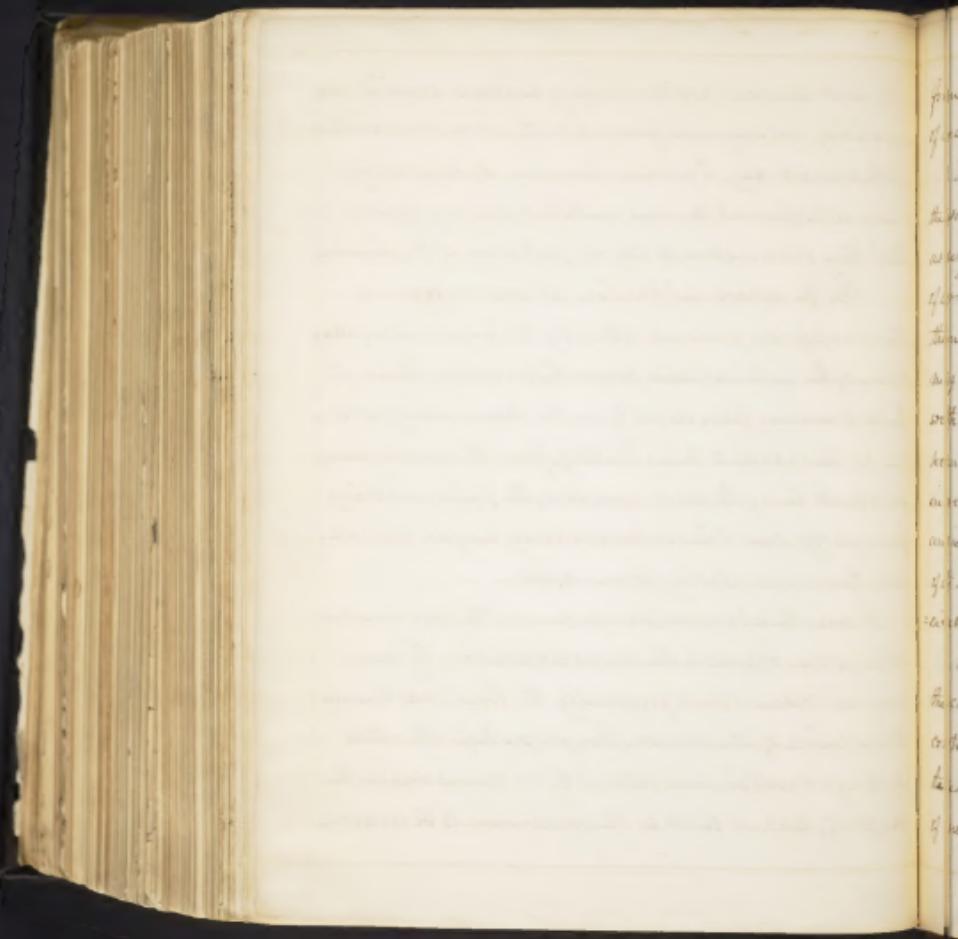
Presented on the 23rd of January

AD 1828

By most medical writers droopy has been considered, as arising in every case from debility, and some authors of the present day, I presume, have been so swayed by their attachment to ideas imbibed during youth, that they still adhere to the old pathology of this disease.

On the above supposition, it was imagined that droopy was produced either by too profuse an evaporation of the natural and proper lubricating fluid of the part, arising from debility in the terminating arteriæ, or that exhalents being healthy, from the corresponding absorcents being torpid or inactive, the fluid not being excreted off, when it has answered every useful purpose, and thus accumulating forms droopy.

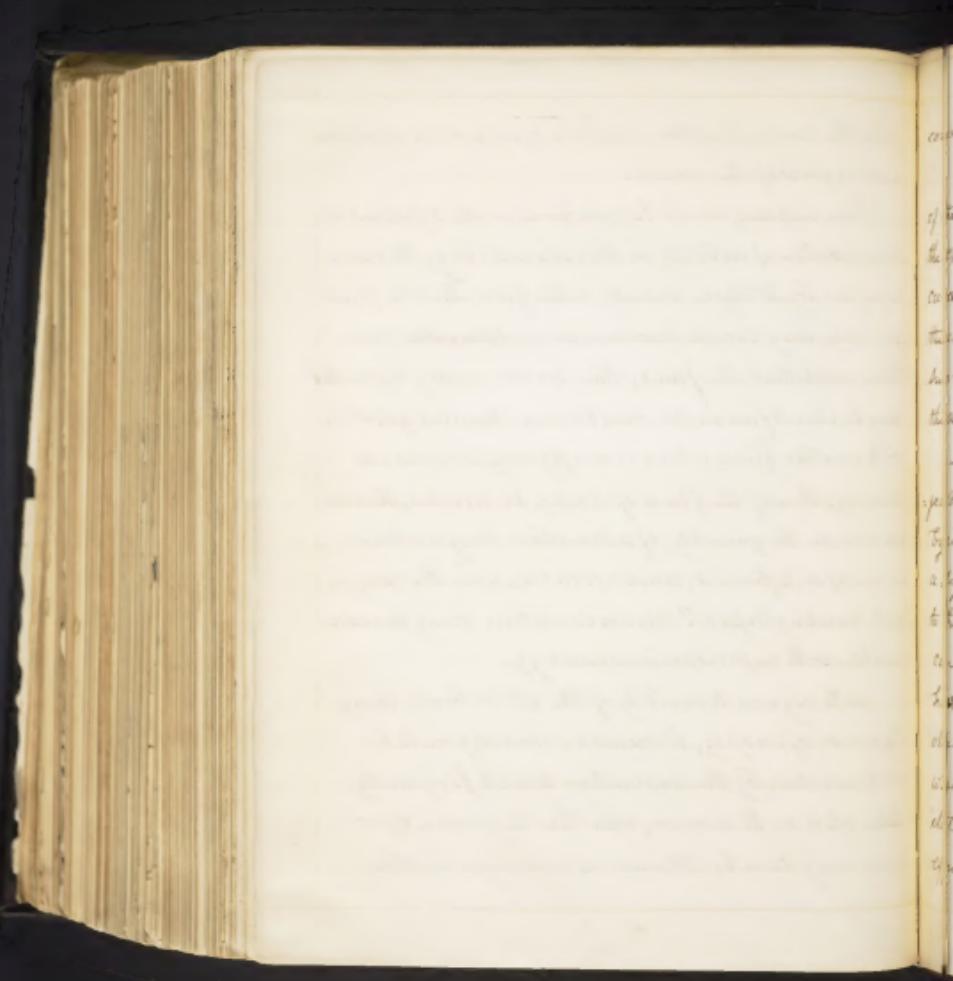
Besides the above mentioned causes, the mechanical obstruction opposed to the venous circulation, by some diseased viscera (most frequently the liver) was believed to be a source of the disease. Though perhaps this state of things exists in some cases, it by no means does in the majority, such at least is the conclusion to be drawn,



from the causes, symptoms, method of cure, and duration
of many cases of the disease.

There appears also to be some force in the objections to
the supposition of debility in the exhalents, being the cause
as urged by Dr. Ayr, namely, either first, That the fluid
of dropsy may escape mechanically, ~~separated~~ from
them, and that the fluid, thus mechanically separated
may be identified in its sensible and chemical qualities
with another fluid which is conspicuously secreted: or
secondly, that if the fluid of dropsy be secreted, then an
increase in the quantity, of a secretion may continue
an indefinite period, unless a decrease in the quantity
of its secreting vessels? Such a condition being incon-
ceivable, with experience and analogy.

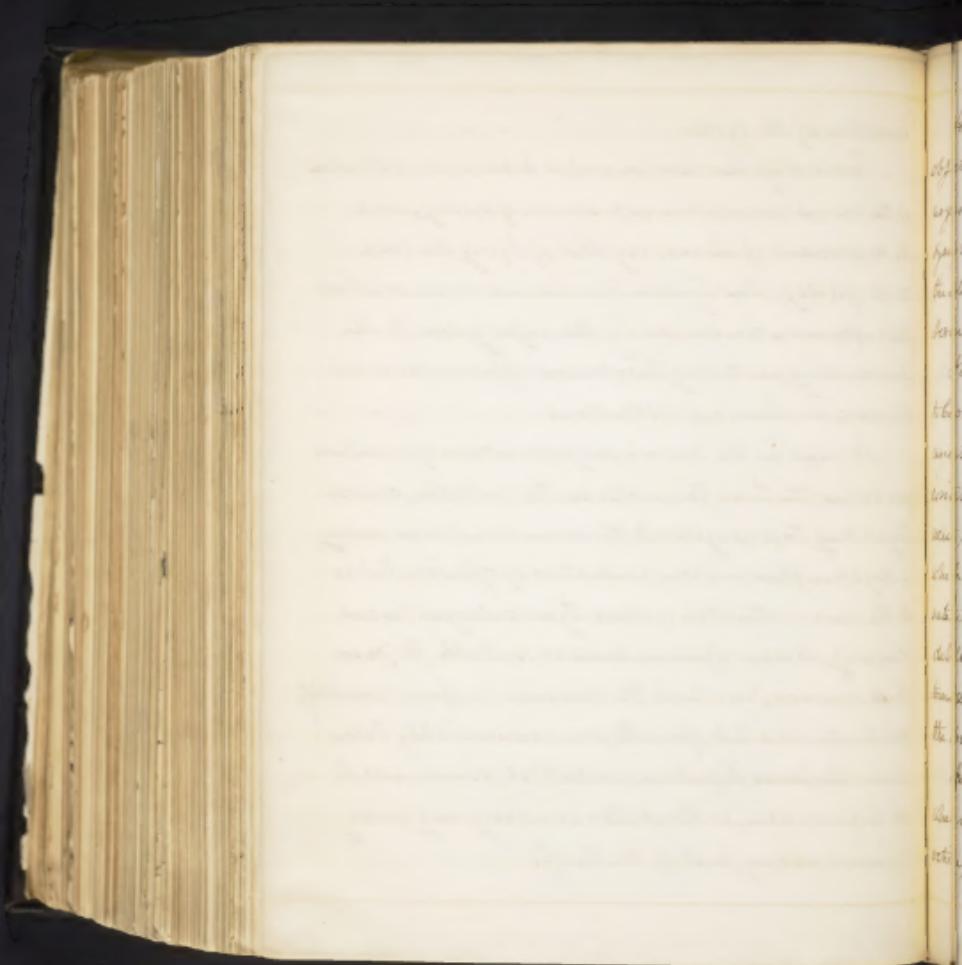
With regard to debility of the absorcents being
the cause of dropsy, it seems in some degree to be
contradicted, by the excretion which frequently
takes place in the disease, also that the specific effect
of mercury can be obtained as readily as in other



conditions of the Systole.

Great stress has been laid upon mechanical obstruction of the venous circulation, as productive of dropsy and the experiment of Lower, viz. that of tying the vena cava of a dog, has by some been deemed conclusive; but the inflammation caused by the injury done to the surrounding parts may have caused effusion, and not the mere mechanical obstruction!

Perhaps in the human subject, in cases of an enlarged viscous, the liver for instance, the irritation caused by it, may be propagated to the serous membrane causing a slight inflammation productive of effusion, but as to the mere obstruction of blood by an enlarged viscous, causing serous effusion, seems improbable, for "cases have occurred, in which the vena cava was found completely obliterated as a tube, from the point immediately below where the venae hepaticae united to it, downwards to its bifurcation, without there occurring any watery effusion in any part of the body".



Having mentioned cursorily some of the leading objections to the old hypothesis, we shall now state the arguments, derived from a consideration of the causes, symptoms, method of cure, and dispositions, in support of the idea, that a low degree of inflammation in the bones, nerves, is the essential cause of drophy.

First of the causes amongst these Scurlatena seems to be one, for we frequently find anasarca supervening an attack, which drophy is probably caused either by irritating the skin, or by taking cold and the primary acute inflammation having changed into a subacute, which state we know frequently causes effusion, at any rate what ever is the cause, it does not seem to be debility. For Dr. Blackall observes "The time the symptoms, and subject of this attack, by no means permit the opinion that it originates in mere debility."

Another cause, is the abuse of mercury, this medicine when injudiciously exhibited, we know to excite an action injurious to health, and this action appears

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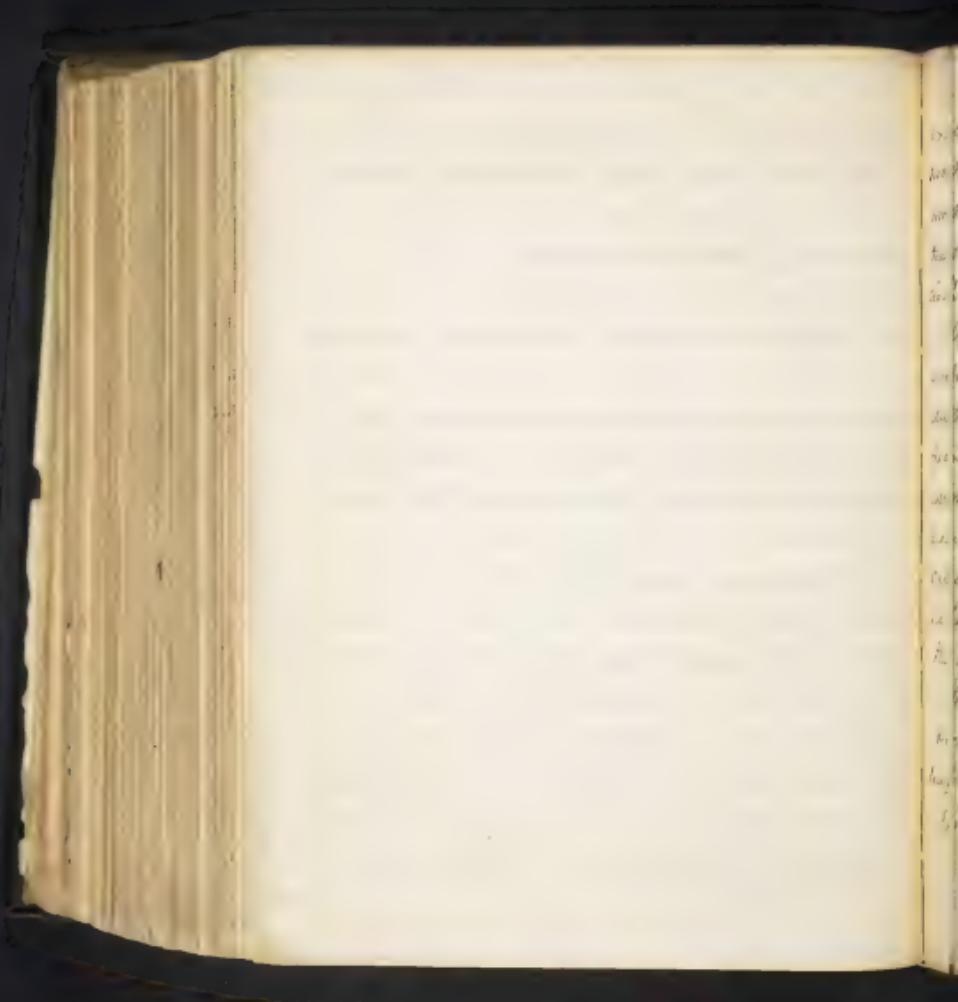
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become insidious, — home, Matthew considers it
being equally sound agency, that should remove
him in a high degree asserts that venescion is the
best remedy for proctite ulceration:

With regard to the membranes, the variation etc.
being considered merely as an object and not the disease,
were not to look in it many signs and advances of
inflammation, some however do occur, first the
mucous has been sound purged, & the sections & lymph
vit, and in one case Dr. Blackall says, "The fluid
& the cellular mass were correlated & externally
these appearances agree with what Dr. Bent writes
as existing in glands irritated by chronic inflam-
mation, serious membranes, he says, "they are seldom
but almost always, tricole & thick scaly."

The urine offers more to our consideration on
this point; it has been found to be more or less coagulable
in proportion to the degree of action, which the system
at large manifests; on this point Dr. Blackall is very



which this would use." But when the wine is
most boiled, it coagulates by the heat, and
most quickly, the bacon likewise must be, and
the whole system bears the greatest marks of inclemency
now.

With regard to the use of wine in and those most
useful that are either composed in it, or in strong
distilleries, such is at least the common opinion. To remove
now, Dr. Blackwell would be right, "that physicians
must prove a abortive, or a rectifying, or a
salutary. Those are worthless, however, which are
calculated to reduce the human voice." The inference
is he requires a preparation composed, and ordered
that he never have reason to suspect it to be.

The evidence of Dr. Agar, from the Society of Friends,
Necromus and the treatment of him, namely, blisters
hot, both topical and general, being quelled by the
bryozoans.

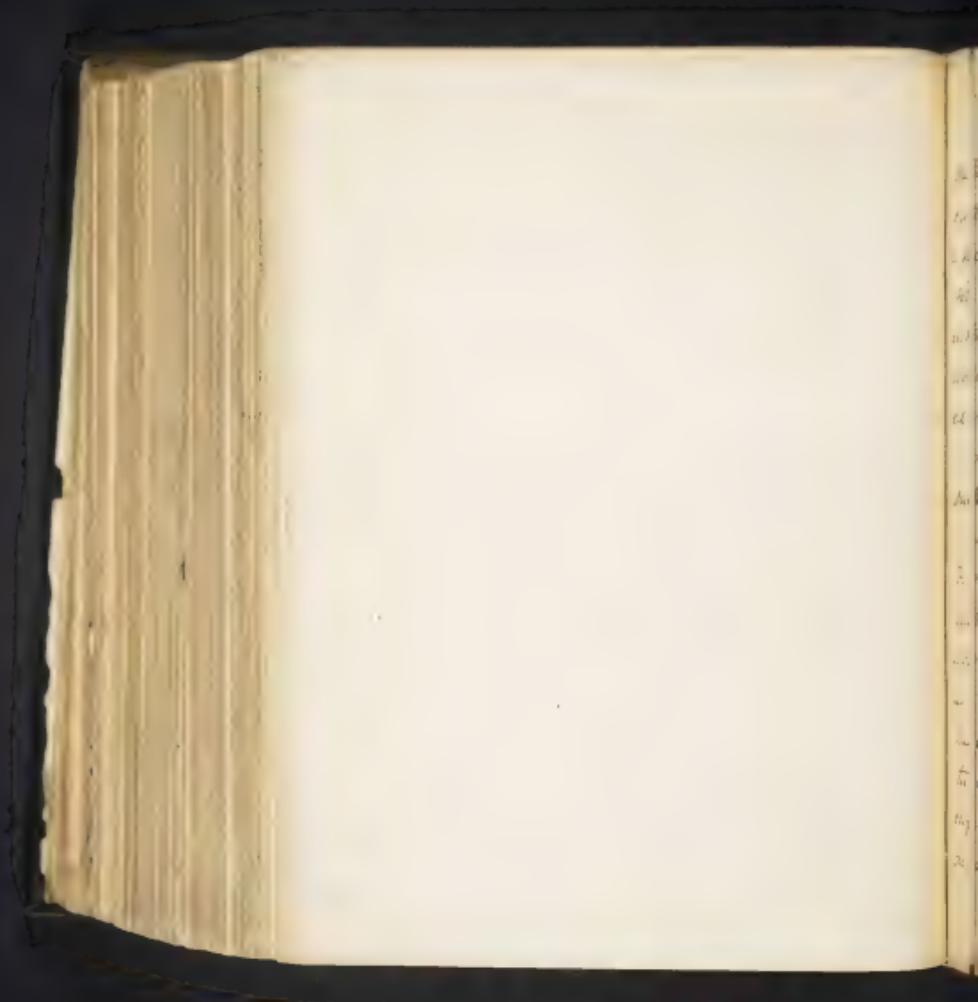
The operation of blisters when applied to

anasarcaous legs has generally been found injurious, as sloughing sores are the consequence, such is precisely the effect to be expected from irritating a tissue already inflamed, whereas if the cellular tissue was in a state of debility as generally supposed, the effect would then be similar to that produced by the application of blisters to parts about to become gangrenous, namely to prevent the extinction of vitality.

Purgatives another portion of the antiphlogistic course, are of incalculable service in drophy, though affected to by some as apt to excite febrile symptoms and irritating nerves in a cancer and that it is necessary to co-existence of, say, y. that of unsuccessional acts to the disease, and where; o. is evident to any in the body, to remove it, and to render the body in a state of health, and to have no tendency to relapse, and to do so in a complete and total manner.

tion. Their uses are also the same, and are protective, & considerately directed.

With regard to the virtues so long considered as specific for rheumatism, medical concurrence has, to a hypothesis, decided: at least the reliance that medical men formerly had in the power of diuretic medicines being made to supersede anatomical & physi-
cal evidence has proved to be false, but this want
of success, from a more consideration of ancient artic-
les belonging to the class, remains; many, in ancient
writers, summarizing, and exhibiting in their assert-
ions, as well as harm, while others that claim this
inflammatory action are ~~as~~ ^{as} present; This may account
to the various opinion which articles of this class
have sustained in ancient writers.



Having given a numerous account of the pathology of dropsy, I shall now give a few remarks on that perch natural affection, called in the abdomen, which is called Ascites. The water most commonly is situated in the cavity of the peritoneum, but in some instances it is found between the peritoneum and abdominal muscles, when in this situation it is called cystic dropsy.

Ascites is of Greek derivation, from *as* *xos* a sack, from its sack like protuberance.

Although the approach of the disease is rather a moist, the symptoms, which denote the hydrocephalous, together with swelling and fluctuation of the abdomen, are sometimes so trifling in a much obscure way as to render its diagnosis somewhat difficult, and it has even been confounded with typhus and the tumorous pregnancy. To prevent such mistakes we ought to pay strict attention to the symptoms of the disease, which are the following.



such a severe complaint with an easy writer.
such as hydrocephalus, &c. &c. &c. diminish the
action of urine. This, however, is not usual
unless, and a peculiar expression of countenance
which is called leucophlegmatic. There is a small
protuberance in the hypogastric region which
gradually extends upwards over the lower abdomen
and becomes tumid and hard. The counte-
nance becomes pale and livid, is cachectic, and
the respiration is affected. Constipation exists in
every stage of the disease. The urine is scanty and
high coloured. The pulse is feeble though full
and rounded, the skin is hot and dry, and there is
great thirst. In the mean time the accumulation
of water continues to increase, at this time a distinct
fluctuation is very evident. It may be ascertained by
a careful examination. The mode which Professor
Chapman recommends it to be done is the following.
By placing the hand on one side of the abdomen,

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and stroking the opposite with the other, so this way the water may be distinctly felt. The symptoms now become more aggravated. There is great torpor and heaviness, with an obscure fever, the involution is impious, and inspiration sinks under a low feeble.

The causes of Edema may be treated of under two heads, viz. Symptomatic and idiopathic. When it is induced symptomatically the cause will be found to exist in the morbid affections of some of the viscera, as the Liver Spleen &c. The disease is caused in this case not by the mere obstruction occasioned by an enlarged viscous, but from the inflammation existing in the diseased organ affecting the peritoneal coat. Dr. Lister is very explicit upon this when he says "how does the serous discharge always take place in every case where these organs are morbidly affected, but only where the peritoneal covering participates in their disease; for the casual inflammation in those cases, where it occurs

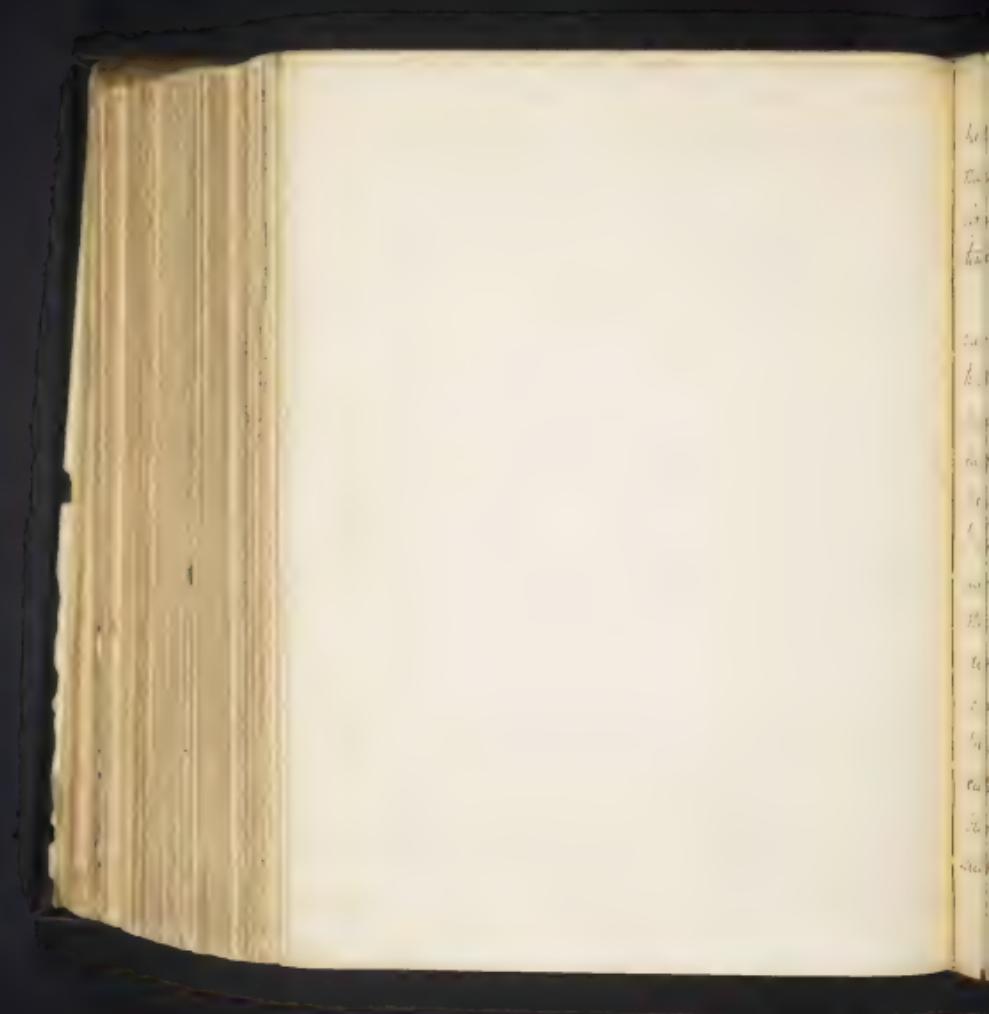


weiles, does so by extending from the cellular tissue
of the internal structure of the organ, to the serous
tissue investing it; and from thence a filament passes;
it passes with varying degrees, & rapidly through
the hole of the postural sin. where?

It is to be induced by some tickles of
which as inter mittent fever, & humation &c.

Such is oxidus in which this affection, it may
be induced by any of the causes of inflammation,
as heat or cold, Indian changes, a violent touch of
respiration, &c. &c. & then again a violent exhalation
where morsels &c. & so far I apprehend the opin
ion that it occasionally arises in a manner, in which
so much as has heretofore indeed, is by
the desecration and contamination of a gap.

Examination of persons who have died in this disease
exhibit the following phenomena: the liver is found
hard and tuberculated, the bowels are thickened
and increased, the stomach and bowels dilated, the



hotways. Spleen and pancreas in it over full condition,
the mesenteric glands are often round indurated, the
intra-pancreatic fluid is found. I have seen characters and
traces.

The first indication which meets the eye, for
our consideration in the treatment of this disease, is
the change that has not condition of the system which
causes the irritation. The remedy best adapted to
remove the above indication, is blood-letting either
local or general, & after passing the former, we may
"apply bleeding amply & properly conducted, but the
advantage of acting only slightly on the general
strength, and very considerably on the local
strength, combined with local general bleeding is
sometimes indispensably necessary in the early
stages; it is not or were futile symptoms (xiii), indi-
cated by a tense, hard uncreased pulse, with dry
heat, a hot and dry skin, a parched tongue, diffi-
culty respiration, thirst and other indications.



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Having pursued this part of the depleting plan of treatment to some extent, we will point that the aubiliary remedies are more efficacious.

As far as I can see, the disease appears to be becoming increasingly prevalent throughout the country. The mountaineers will be the most numerous, if I may be allowed to use the term, to be affected, as they are the most numerous, and the numerous communities of miners &c. the class, who have been exposed, as we see from pictures passed in evacuating the stricken child in a domino drops, West, for long, have been the most numerous, Cremer, and the 5th, also & 8th & 18th.

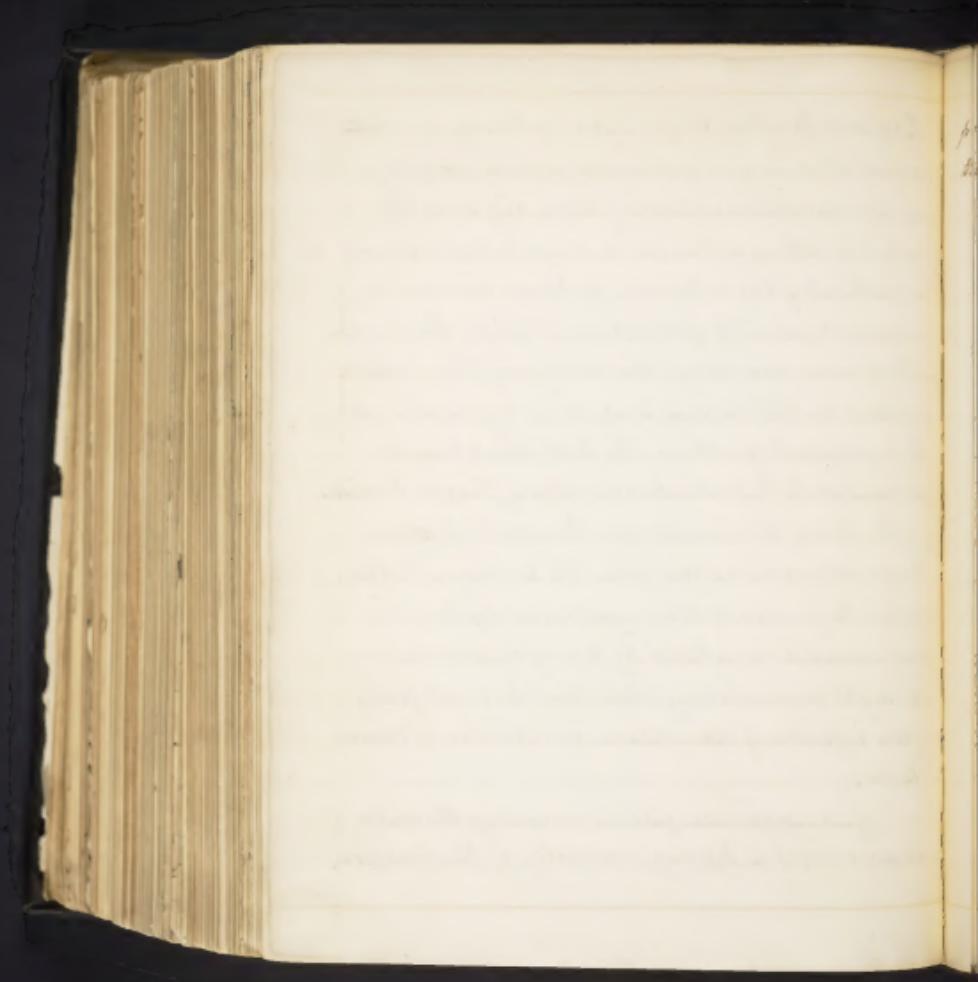
We are, then, anxious to have a more substantial
and effective way to see the full value of
of government, which is not a part of man's work to
improve, though it is not always so obvious,
but their operation of other factors in the community
will result in much greater welfare, correction
and, no bad action on which we often depend.



If we wish to obtain the full effect of this class of remedies we ought to keep in view, certain rules which are necessary in the proper administration of them, viz. While the patient is taking a diuretic he should be kept cool and as much out of bed as possible, he should be allowed a moderate quantity of drink, as it assists the operation of the diuretic, and allays that distressing thirst which is incident to this disease, and which aggravates all the unpleasant symptoms, The best drink is water acidulated to the patient's taste, a decoction of Juniper berries.

The best of the diuretics are those which produce large watery evacuations from the kidneys. Dr. Apse prefers the powder of dried Squill and Sijellaria, in very minute doses, assisted by 10 grs of calomel taken at night and allowing the patient to drink freely of an infusion of dandelion, or a solution of Cresmer Tartar.

If all our remedies fail in evacuating the water we must resort to tapping, especially if the distension



produces much pain, as great relief is obtained and
the system becomes more susceptible to our remedies.

